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THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians
(Section of the Library Association)

EDITOR: PETER LABDON
Central Library, Southgate, Stevenage.

VOL. 54. No. 11.

NOVEMBER, 1961

Comment

The Library Association Conference

The President offers his apologies to all members of the A.A.L. who attended the Annual General Meeting of the Library Association at Hastings with the object of staying also to hear the paper given by Mr. W. S. H. Ashmore during the A.A.L. Session scheduled to follow it. Those who were there will know that the circumstances were quite exceptional, and that regrettable though the postponement was, it could hardly have been avoided. Mr. Ashmore gave his paper in fact on the following day, and it will appear in due course in the printed Proceedings of the Conference. It should be essential reading for all librarians, but especially for those concerned in the practice of book-provision. As is now generally known, the A.G.M. passed the secretary's proposals for the re-organisation of the L.A. Those affecting the restriction of the voting rights of institutional members and the terms of the Charter now await the necessary sanction of Her Majesty's Privy Council, which may or may not be given.

Cataloguing and classification—some aspects.

The West Midlands Division announce that this pamphlet is temporarily out of print. A new issue is in the press and copies will be available shortly at the original price of 3s. 3d. from the Hon. Secretary of the Division, Central Library, St. James' Road, Dudley, Worcs.

The A.A.L. Council

A full report of the October meeting of the Council will appear in the next issue of the *Assistant Librarian*, but it was especially notable for a meeting of the Press and Publications Committee, which lasted from 1.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. without significant interruption and which included the showing of the complete list of films made and distributed by the Association. Members of the Sub-Committee went away from the meeting with the justifiable feeling of having earned their expenses.

The Library Association Prize Essay

The Essay Prize for 1961 has been awarded to Frank Hatt, Tutor-Librarian at the Canterbury College of Art for his paper entitled "Libraries and culture." This appears in the October issue of the *Library Association Record*. Members will wish to congratulate Mr. Hatt upon his success.

S.L.A.N.

The next issue of the *Scottish Library Association News* will be its fiftieth. The journal has a deserved reputation both for its efficient coverage of Scottish librarianship and for the quality of its production. The *Assistant Librarian* extends its congratulations to *SLAN* and its best wishes for a further half-century, and more, of flourishing development.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER : a critical approach to County Library practice.

By Audrey Pepper, Buckinghamshire County Library

My qualifications as a critic are painfully inadequate, but it was suggested that as a newcomer to county libraries, I might offer some reflections on this, to me, new sphere of service.

I should like to begin by saying a few words about the lack of communication between county and municipal staffs on the factory floor as it were. Although assistants in municipal systems do have contact with county libraries through Divisional meetings of the A.A.L., visits and committee work, this is rather haphazard. There is usually little knowledge of the differing professional backgrounds, and although county and municipal libraries have the same ideals and objectives, techniques and practices often form a barrier between the two. Personally, I should like to see co-operative staff exchange schemes between county and municipal libraries incorporated in staff-training. When working for examinations, a month spent in a different system is worth six months' textbook study. Administrative difficulties can be overcome as has been proved by the current existence of such schemes, with the co-operation of county and municipal chiefs and local authorities. After all, one hears enough in the profession about lack of communication with the public, the inability to "sell" ourselves or our service, and yet we allow one half of that service to remain in virtual ignorance of the other's capabilities and methods in serving the same ends.

And so to the real thing, actually joining a county library service. To begin, as I did, at a county Headquarters, the first impression is that it does *not* resemble a municipal central library; the routines, the departments and the staff seem larger than life and twice as complicated. To come from a municipal system comprising one central library, with lending, reference, local and junior departments, plus five branches and an embryo schools library service serving 12 schools, a county system of one Headquarters, 22 branches over 150 centres, and a schools library service for some 320 schools is a trifle staggering.

Although the population served in the county is only five times greater than that in the municipal area, the county has 40 times as many service points. Another interesting comparison is that the total book stock was only in the ratio of three to one, which seems to me to prove that although the counties now have much larger book funds, the half-century start that municipal libraries enjoyed has not yet altogether been overtaken. This may be one of the reasons for the seeming neglect of non-book materials in counties; problems of distance and geography also make the housing, mobility and use of such collections difficult.

The traditional routines and practices of a county library Headquarters are being radically altered, with the advent of Telex and other mechanical aids, in an effort to eradicate the bugbear of a centralised service, that is dealing with the "popular demand" books. These should lead to the Headquarters moving closer to my original concept, an administrative unit *plus* a bibliographical clearing house. Staff and bibliographies will be freed to deal with more specialised enquiries.

The question of county library service points, apart from the greater number, can be puzzling to a municipally trained assistant. Mobiles and centres of course are sometimes quite new experiences, also exhibition vans. It is difficult for a newcomer to visualise the pre- or even imme-

diately post-war county library scene. With the development of mobiles and new branch building, centres and postal request readers, which I understand were almost the main function of the county library service, are diminishing rapidly so one of the main differences between municipal and county libraries which I had expected to notice is becoming less obvious all the time.

Branches on the surface seem similar in function to their municipal counterparts, but deeper reflection reveals that county branches, while having the same responsibilities, also have larger ones. Often a branch librarian has local committees to deal with, and responsibility for sub-branches and mobiles. A county branch equal in size to a town branch, is often regarded by its public in much the same way as a municipal central library, and the branch librarian is *The Librarian*. With the wider responsibility thus held by the librarian, counties should surely provide greater opportunities for training for senior posts. The branch acts to its own area as a municipal central library; readers will turn to it for reference and bibliographical material, which in a town would be directed immediately to the main library with its greater resources.

The public as a whole is not concerned with *who* provides the library service, but with *what* is provided. Counties have suffered in the past because much of their service has had to be given from temporary or made-over accommodation for branches and centres. Municipal libraries have also been burdened with building trouble, but in almost exactly the opposite way and while central libraries are often too large, ornate, costly and disguised as Gothic nightmares, they are at least recognisable as civic buildings and are often used as the reason why their authorities should retain control over the service provided, however poor and inadequate that service may be.

However, counties now have double opportunities; on the one hand branches featuring new architecture, and on the other, the successful conversion of period buildings, the latter often providing much of beauty and interest in county towns and villages.

There can also be a far more accurate assessment of the needs of the area when planning these new branches for established library areas. Branch development has made new Headquarters even more necessary in many counties, as the new branches both attract new readers and encourage the old faithfuls, so pressure on the Headquarters increases.

Another feature that has interested me is the mobility of county library stock, although I think that in the future this will need to be practised even more than it is to-day. I am thinking here particularly of reference stock and services, perhaps one of the most striking differences I have found so far. At first I found it difficult to accept a mobile reference stock as opposed to the static conception of a municipal reference department, but the advantages to the reader at least gradually became apparent. Even with the establishment of regional reference libraries, mobility will still be the keynote of county library reference services, both between Headquarters and branches and between service point and reader. It seems to me a good idea to have large reference libraries in large urban areas, where readers know a book will be found when required, while at the same time an adjacent system provides opportunities for studying the same book at home without inconveniencing other readers. Of course I realise that new branches and Headquarters buildings will mean the provision of adequate reference facilities, but counties will still have the problem of the isolated community or individual who does not have access to a good library service.

With this last subject, mobility of stock, I seem to have bridged the gap between service points and stock and services. To be frank, I found reference material and the provision of periodical literature in counties suffered in comparison with that in municipal systems I had known.

As regards book selection policy, I feel that the bibliographical organisation of reserve stock, that is particularly of older material and foreign works, is important in counties, and perhaps a co-operative effort is needed here. A brief survey of bureau requests showed me that it was the older books in the social sciences and the humanities which the county library could not supply so readily from its own stock, and that these requests were being supplied by municipal systems of longer standing. The corollary to this is that counties are able to purchase expensive books and have built up good stocks of up-to-date material, particularly in scientific and technical subjects.

With the advent of Subject Specialisation schemes and Regional self-sufficiency in recent material, plus the reorganisation of N.C.L. book acquisition policy and the possibilities given us by such mechanical aids as Telex, I have wondered whether regional library bureaux in their present form could become obsolete for all but older material, pre-1950 that is. Co-operation with neighbouring counties and towns often takes place now, and direct application can supply the book to the reader in a comparatively short space of time. With Telex the time necessary to obtain such loans is considerably reduced. It is becoming commonplace in Buckinghamshire to receive a request in the morning, to obtain locations from the bureau Headquarters, apply directly to a co-operating library and for the book to be in the post the next day. The system works both ways of course. We have received a request from N.C.L. for a work required urgently by, for example, an Outlier library, and have been able to post it to the library immediately.

There are several factors which must influence book selection policy in counties. With increasing book funds, Subject Specialisation schemes dictated by inter-library co-operation and the increase in commercial and technical services, the county library faces dual problems of a far larger book stock in quantity plus the need for subject knowledge of far greater depth than previous practice warranted. Is there a danger of forgetting the arts and humanities? Counties have seen the need for technical and commercial expansion; with industries and firms moving away from the cities to rural areas, the counties are obvious agencies to develop this trend, but not, I hope, at the expense of the emotional and aesthetic needs of individuals and communities.

There is of course a third equally important factor in both county and municipal library administration. I refer of course to Staff. Here again I feel that a county should have the edge over all but the largest municipal systems in opportunities for professional staff management, combined with staff training schemes similar to those found in industry and business organisations. I realise that there would be many valid objections to personnel management from outside the profession and perhaps the only answer will be to include courses of training in this field for senior librarians. Another line of thought which emerges here is that a closer link could be established between county libraries and library schools. County libraries are large organisations and could surely cope with more specialist posts in relationship to training and education for librarianship, such as tutor librarians on the staff. If ever the idea of library teaching schools became practical, surely county libraries should be able and competent to provide the basis for such institutions,

giving approved service of the highest quality. It needs thinking about now.

On studying the annual reports and other publications of county libraries, the same heartfelt cry can be discerned in nearly all—the inability to attract and hold staff of the highest calibre. Perhaps this is another field for successful co-operation between counties, a high powered, stream-lined recruiting campaign. At first I found that the mobility of staff in county libraries was rather confusing; it seemed that junior staff in particular were here today and gone tomorrow, entailing what seemed to be needless repetition of teaching routines, but it certainly seems to keep people on their toes and gives juniors a better idea of the organisation as a whole, provided they can stand the pace. I sometimes feel that it would be a good thing if senior members of staff were as mobile. Against this I would set the problem of odd-jobbery, which is not confined to counties by any means, but which results in dispersal of effort and wasted time. I shudder to think what a time and motion study expert would do when confronted by some of the situations that must arise in counties all over the country at the moment. With the re-thinking that recent expansion has caused in county libraries and at last the possibility of working in buildings planned for current needs and the purpose in hand, stream-lining of routines and allocation of duties should be a first consideration.

As a closing thought, I would suggest that in the library situation of today, a balance should be struck between the pride that municipal libraries feel on what they *have* achieved and that which county libraries feel they *will* achieve, and that which county libraries feel they *will* achieve, as both counties and municipal systems still have much to give each other.

A paper given at the County Libraries Conference, Durham, 1961.

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The List of essential professional textbooks, 1961

This List, which was published in the October issue of the *Assistant Librarian*, was initially compiled by the Education Sub-Committee of the A.A.L. in response to a request from the Moderating Committee of the Library Association. For 1961 the List has been revised and it is again offered as a checklist for staff libraries.

Most of the books are in print, but a few o/p books have again been included where supplies are generally good throughout the country. Books on the history of English literature have not been included on the grounds that students will have access to the general stocks of public libraries.

In addition to the minimum list there was published a supplementary list of books recommended by the Association. As far as is known, all are in print.

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HOW LOVELY IS YOUTH

By Margaret Truscott,

North Western Polytechnic School of Librarianship.

Write an essay she said on the school library she said just as we was real quiet just because we was tarting up a rotten ole picture in one of her books. Fancy leaving that out, makes you think how ignorant some people are on the body beautiful, that's what Auntie May said in the paper last week, and I should think so too from the questions some people ask—"My boy friend wants to take liberties . . ." stupid bitch, my mum says you're only young once.

"How lovely is youth,
But it flies from us,
If you want to be happy, be happy now
There is no certainty of tomorrow."

Lorenzo the Magnificent, 15th century.

Just before the libertine comes up me and Jean was rabbiting about dresses. Jean was saying that she didn't dig them above your knees with them stuck out like a lampshade from Woollie's because it gave boys ideas and I said smashin' and anyhow she could be a real cool chick if she tried a beehive hairdo and a pair of stilletoes. And she said she didn't want to finish up like my sister. So we shut up and started the drawing. Then the old marm comes up and tells us to nark it and starts yattering away about respect for property and the collected learning of the ages surrounding us and all that ole jazz. So I fetches up the earplugs and starts to have a fink about what she wore in her day when they didn't have money but paid wiv cupons for them lousy school uniforms of navy blue gym tunics and a button up shirt as well as elasticated navy bloomers.

"The traditional schoolgirl's uniform is a great blot on nature . . . we should protest against what tradition does to our daughters as loudly as we protest against what uncontrolled innovation does to our landscape."

The Guardian, 24.2.61.

"Perhaps it is true that the young female of to-day owes her emancipation to a long line of noble personages. Is it too absurd to say that Gutenberg, Caxton, Karl Klic, Chancellor and King are partially responsible for this enlightened attitude?"

The Photogravure Weekly.

The school library is full of books on all sorts of fings—Miss says there's eight thousand and at the end there will be twelve, and you can see she's right as I've pinched five already and there's 1,399 other girls with the same idea.

Course, when we first joined the school we was told all about how to use the library and what it was for. It was the Head that told us that, but the librarian she didn't like it and tried to show off by whispering *sotto voce* like. I didn't like that 'cause she reminded me of a bloke

on the telly who is supposed to sell them books what makes you pass the 11 plus, but only sells himself and tells you how bloomin' smart he is.

My boyfriend says its because they are narcissic, if you see what he means.

When we was kids in the lower school, we used to go to the library once a week, and a real giggle it was too, specially when we would try to pull out them cards in those little drawers. Once we had to choose somefing that we liked and write about it, and we could look at books on the subject but was not allowed to copy what was written in them which seems batty to me when someone else had already done it for you. I wanted to do pop singers but I couldn't find anyfing about 'em in the library so I knew then that them what write books must be a lot of yahoos. Miss wanted me to write about "famous women" and gave me a book to use but I couldn't see B.B. in their, although I remember somebody called Fry because I yaffles the choc bars she makes.

"A civilized man's understanding of his own past,
of the history, literature and culture from
which he springs and which gives his life its
verve, is what distinguishes him from a savage."

The Observer, 26.2.61.

When we was in our last year at school we had to go and tell the Head what we wanted to do in the way of jobs like. I didn't really want to do anyfink much except pick up some lolly, but the ole battle-ship said I was wasting me talents and what about an office job. I remembered reading a smashing yarn in *Beauty* about a girl who married the boss so I said maybe I would dig it. The Head said to go to the library and read about it, so I went and was given a box full of them thin paperbacks with H.M.S.O. over their fronts. I wern't alf cheesed cost I thought they was going to be love yarns.

"... they earn their daily living for the sake of
paying dues, taxes, mortgages, instalments on
their car or their television sets: in short they
satisfy the essential needs of life for extraneous
reasons."

Lewis Mumford.

Of course I'm not so completely moronic as I pretend, really I'm rather a Bas Bleu. Yet the Gospel according to Fleet Street has created my image so firmly within your mind that I am now a contemporary expression of Paul Slickey's accomplices and as such am forced to conform.

So if you read that the government hopes to introduce a more enlightened educational programme, write *tout de suite* to the editor of the *Times* complaining of "extravagant expenditure," and if a person under 21 years is hauled before the court, ask your public school son what he would do, and if he says "Whip 'em, Mammy, whip 'em," the best of luck at S. Woodford.

Reprinted from "Polychronicon," *Journal of the North Western Polytechnic School of Librarianship.*

Notes on examination technique for candidates sitting Library Association Examinations

1. Candidates should realise at the outset that these are external examinations, and are uniform wherever they are held. Candidates are anonymous to the examiners, and their results are therefore obtained entirely by what appears in their scriptbooks.

2. Some of the questions set require the simple statement of facts learnt, some require original thought and the expression of personal opinions, while others require the application of facts to given situations. It is important to recognise the differences between questions, and attention is directed to the *Library Association Record* for April, 1958, page 129, where there is an article on examination questions entitled "Words of command." From study of this it will be clear that it is not enough to come into the examination room with "prepared answers" in mind; candidates must be ready to relate what they have learnt to the specific question asked. This can best be anticipated by practice in answering examination questions during the period of preparation.

3. Begin an answer by underlining the words of command on the question paper. Next write down a series of key-words to the ideas which the question suggests, then arrange these key-words in an order which will develop an answer in a logical and systematic manner, and only then begin to write the answer. Paper for rough work is provided in the examination room.

In writing the answer, do not waste valuable time on an introduction which is not relevant to the question: in half-an-hour it is difficult to fill more than two pages of a script book, and half a page spent on irrelevances is a quarter of the mark-earning time lost. The examiners are experienced in judging scripts, and do not allocate marks to irrelevant material. It is important for a candidate to apportion time properly. If six questions are answered it is only necessary to gain an average of ten marks per question in order to pass; but five answers must average 12 marks and four answers 15 marks to obtain 50 per cent. of the total marks.

4. The style of answers is important, too. If a question asks for a report, it must be written in report style with facts properly marshalled and no unsubstantiated opinions introduced. Its style should take into account the body or person to whom it is addressed, and the superscription and ending should be appropriate. If an essay is called for, what is wanted is not literary gymnastics, but a plain straightforward account, after the manner of a good government report. Humour, offensive remarks about examiners and examinations, purple passages and ranting are out of place in an examination script. Remember that the examiner is looking for future professional librarians, so it is better to eschew the worm's eye view of librarianship, and to write as a responsible person. This includes writing in correct English and avoiding the use of slang and colloquialisms.

5. It is essential to leave time to read a script through in the last few minutes of an examination, so that grammatical and spelling errors can be corrected and punctuation smoothed out. These things influence the examiners' judgment considerably and so does the legibility and neatness of handwriting. Ball-point pens are not forbidden, but are better not used because they offset, and this makes the reading of some scripts a difficult and irritating task. Indeed, some scripts written with a ball-point pen become almost illegible.

6. Librarians spend much of their working lives seeking information which has slipped out of sight owing to the carelessness and inaccuracy of others. It is of the essence of librarianship that work should be done clearly and neatly, that facts should be presented accurately and in the proper perspective. The examiners look for such things, as well as subject content, in the scripts of candidates for the Library Association Examinations.

BERNARD I. PALMER,
Education Officer, The Library Association.

Correspondence

Kompass Register

After all that has been said about the problem of assessing reference books for libraries, I am amazed and appalled that a librarians' periodical should include under the heading "Review," a commendatory puff for a new reference book BEFORE IT HAS EVEN BEEN PUBLISHED. I refer, of course, to the piece of advance publicity for *Kompass register—United Kingdom* which appeared on pages 183-4 of the September 1961 issue of *The Assistant Librarian*.

PHILIP M. DE PARIS,
Board of Trade Library.

It's all very well to be quick off the mark, but wasn't it a bit premature to include in your September, 1961, issue, a review of *Kompass-Register—United Kingdom*, due to be published Easter, 1962?

Kompass-Register Ltd. have a deservedly high reputation for their European directories, and there is little doubt that the U.K. edition will live up to the promise which your reviewer anticipates. Even so, it would have been better to have waited for publication rather than review on the strength of publicity handouts and the publisher's reputation.

I hope you will continue to keep an eye on this neglected field of reviewing, however, for there is a crying need for prompt, critical and comparative reviews of directories and other expensive reference books by librarians for librarians.

PHILIP COLEHAN,
Tottenham Public Libraries.

My notice of *Kompass Register, United Kingdom*, was not intended so much to be a review of a new book as to be an indication that a new edition (albeit British) of an established work was shortly to be available.

It was commendatory for the simple reason that I wish to commend this work. I should have thought that Mr. de Paris was familiar with the existing Continental *Kompasses*, which I have found of great use in accurately tracing manufacturers of all products, but if he is not aware of them, I hereby commend them to him also.

IAN H. WILKES,
Leonard Hill Ltd.

Editorially there are three main points to be made in justification of this review:—

(i) Mr. Wilkes's comments were obviously based upon his own use and knowledge of the Continental editions of Kompass Register with the intention of relating them to the forthcoming English edition.

(ii) This being so, such independent views were judged to be of sufficient value to the profession at large in estimating the use of a major reference tool in the face of intensive publicity from the publishers.

(iii) The fact that the published comments were favourable is not to the point, editorially, and use of words such as "puff" and phrases such as "advance publicity" with derogatory intent are meaningless in context. Any favourable review is a puff, and all reviews are advance publicity to people who are not familiar with the work under discussion, no matter when the review appears. No one has yet quarrelled with Mr. Wilkes' assessment.

(iv) Purely for the record, neither Mr. Wilkes nor I have any connection whatsoever with Kompass Register Ltd.

THE EDITOR.

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Libraries in Scotland

Poor old Scotland! Dr. Johnson had nothing on Kevin P. Jones, who, with scarcely time to draw his breath after his recent retreat across the Border, flays us with barbs sharper than the prickly thistles he has left behind. But let me assure your readers that his jaundiced picture of Scottish librarianship in the doldrums is overdrawn.

Salaries of burgh librarians in Scotland compare favourably with those of English towns in the same population groups. A recent advertisement for the post of Chief Librarian in a Scottish city drew 62 applications, mostly from south of the Border. Mr. Jones himself, as Senior Assistant in Motherwell and Wishaw Public Library, was paid on a scale as generous as he would have received in a similar post in England. A few weeks before he left Scotland he was offered an appointment as District Librarian in Lanark County Library at a salary range of £915—£975, which is higher than the advertised scale of the post he went to in England. These facts, known to Mr. Jones from his own personal experience, make his sweeping denunciation of library conditions in Scotland the more inexplicable. Our straits are much less dire than he alleges.

True, we have not yet achieved an A.P.T. II award, though a claim for parity with English conditions is at present before the J.I.C. And Mr. Jones is right when he states that there are too few posts for Deputies, Senior Assistants and Children's Librarians. But he has no grounds for blaming this on lack of concern or failure to protest on the part of Scottish librarians. I spoke out strongly on these very points in my Presidential address to the Scottish Library Association at Alloa in 1955 and with some effect, for there has been a noticeable improvement in the last few years. Other Scottish librarians have voiced their criticisms and advanced constructive proposals on the deficiencies in our

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library services. The Scottish Library Association has waged a continuous campaign for years past by correspondence, personal interviews and public statements in support of an improved salaries structure, and publicity has been given on various occasions in the *S.L.A. News* and elsewhere.

Having sojourned amongst us for six or more years, Mr. Jones might have been expected to know of these things, but such is his apparent ignorance as disclosed in his letter of what went on around him that he might as well have been in Australia with his head buried in the sand like an ostrich.

Perhaps that's why he found the Ages in Scotland so Dark. Should the strong air of Yorkshire help to restore his eyesight he may discover that in the field of librarianship the high road to England has virtues and drawbacks at both ends and carries a two-way traffic of bright boys.

WM. B. PATON,
Lanark County Library.

Few Scots can fail to echo Mr. Jones' disenchantment with services north of the Border, though it is odd that he should rest on a ritual condemnation devoid of constructive comment. Generalisation is misleading and Scots libraries range from the neo-Utopian to the quasi-Dickensian. In the latter in-service training and staff initiative in assistance to readers are actively discouraged while responsibility is delegated only when scapegoats are required.

In some cases it has been suggested that the dead level of shambling mediocrity is maintained to suit the interests of a generation who "attained" seniority in or around the war years without benefit of qualifications, whilst better candidates were more arduously employed. It is at least undeniable that the *status quo* is fostered by the connivance of many authorities who persist in appointing unqualified candidates to posts which should long since have outgrown their capabilities.

It follows that in many areas the public have been deprived of the bibliographic service for which they allegedly pay whilst those who theoretically staff it are denied the opportunity to learn their *metier*.

Yet, *pace* Mr. Jones, the picture is not all black. A few authorities have now accepted their obligations *vis-a-vis* work with young people, interlending, the readers' advisory services (this last with dark misgivings). For the future, a national negotiating procedure might help to neutralise the flow south. For the rest we must look to time and the Grim Reaper—always one of the more progressive forces in Scots librarianship.

JAMES F. NISBET,
Clydebank Public Library.

Mr. W. B. Paton is President-elect of the Library Association, and all members of the Association of Assistant Librarians will wish to take the opportunity of congratulating him upon his election. A happy, rewarding and memorable year to you, sir!

Has TV changed our reading habits?

Miss Marion Wilden-Hart would like us to think that TV is responsible for encouraging reading, but cannot prove her case. It is certainly not boosting the sales of books, as Mr. John Boon, President of the Publishers' Association, told the Bournemouth Conference of Booksellers earlier this year, as reported in the *Bookseller*, May 20th, 1961. Let me remind Miss Wilden-Hart of what he said: "I am very sceptical about some of the statistics I read. I doubt whether people in this country are reading more. I am pretty certain that the teenagers are not. I don't believe that television helps reading. It may help a few particular titles, but it must do untold damage to entertainment reading, the reading of fiction and so on. I know that these are pretty broad generalisations, but I think they carry a substratum of truth."

If Miss Wilden-Hart still remains unconvinced, she should look around her at all those bookless homes up and down the country (and there must be plenty around Lambeth!) where countless millions are crouched over their TV sets each evening and would no sooner think of switching off than scuttling up the steps of their nearest public library. The sad fact is that instead of a nation of bookworms, we have degenerated into a race of television moles. "The development of new public interests through the TV medium could provide us with more—and more intelligent—readers." Wishful thinking, I'm afraid, and with colour TV soon on the way, the chances are slim.

Miss Wilden-Hart even asks whether the problem of television affecting reading is important for us at all. Really! Are we to believe that librarians are such a lot of loonies that they can't face up to this question after thirty years? If unimportant, how else do we expect to win potential readers from the vast televising public? In what other way do we expect them to become book-minded and reading-conscious. The question, surely, is equally important for the whole book-world—not merely for librarians, but for publishers, booksellers and authors alike.

JOHN O'RIORDAN,
Enfield Public Libraries.

Library Publicity

I hope you share my resentment at the tone and content of the letter from Mr. Higgins, the Public Relations Adviser, in his criticism of your July editorial on Library Association publicity in connection with the Commonwealth Technical Training Week. It may be of interest to know that in October of last year, I urged the Library Association to take the opportunity of using Commonwealth Technical Training Week for publicising the contribution which libraries can make towards technical training. I also made one or two suggestions as to how this might be done, but this did not receive official approval.

The Library Association production, acting presumably upon advice, was a pitiable effort, devoid of imagination, purpose or design and, in my view, quite inappropriate for the occasion. The poverty of ideas was matched by the poor standard of production. If this is the best that the Library Association can be *advised* to do, it would be better not to do it at all.

In his defence, Mr. Higgins quotes Aldous Huxley, but I would like to remind him that Aldous Huxley also wrote *Eyeless in Giza*—and I for one, have no desire to have dealings with the Philistines.

H. K. GORDON BEARMAN,
West Sussex County Library.



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